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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS - SITREP 1 -
CORRECTED COPY

¶1. SUMMARY: Polling in Nigeria got off to a slow start for the April 14 round of state elections. Most observers reported that polling began by about 9:30 vice the 8:00 beginning time. Problems observed thus far include voters registers missing or in two different versions, untrained poll workers, party agents without identification and isolated security incidents. For now, the situation is calm, but Mission observers say; that as delays mount, many voters are losing patience. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Polling in Nigeria got off to a slow start for the April 14 round of state elections, including the election of Governors for all 36 states. In Edo State, Embassy observers report that polling began on time in Benin City. However, elsewhere, polling did not begin until 9:00 or later. By 9:30, Embassy observers report that polling had begun in some places in Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi, Nasarawa, Niger, Edo and Lagos states. As of 11:00 reports from various sources indicate that polling is yet to begin in Rivers, Enugu and Abia states.

¶3. Early in the day, Embassy observers reported a light turnout and a complete absence of materials and officials. As the INEC poll workers arrived, it took them 30 minutes or more to organize the sites for operation. At some locations, the poll workers refused to begin the process until security personnel arrived. Observers report a wide variety of polling methods in use and they also report that poll workers do not appear to be adequately trained. In one location, a poll worker reported his site had received 99 ballots for the 600 plus registered voters.

¶4. International observers report that party agents in Lagos have no credentials and this is causing some confusion in several locations. Press reports, confirmed by Police contacts, indicate that "PDP thugs" are interfering with the vote at some locations in Benin City and that an INEC vehicle was attacked by "armed robbers" in the Shagamu area, a suburb of Lagos in Ogun state.

¶5. Heavy police and military presence is being reported in Plateau, Kano, Kaduna and Anambra states. At least two police stations were torched in Port Harcourt, Rivers state, early on the morning of the 14th. Reports from an NGO, confirmed by the police, indicate that about 20 policemen were killed and others may have been taken hostage early in the morning of April 14. An INEC vehicle was reportedly set

on fire in the Delta state capital of Asaba by angry voters who, at 10:30, were frustrated with the wait.

¶ 16. Embassy observers report that as of 10:30, no elections materials have been released in Enugu state. Politicians and INEC officials are in a dispute over the authenticity of the materials to be distributed from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) office, with politicians demanding INEC officials certify the validity of the materials and INEC officials refusing to do so. Reports from an NGO in Port Harcourt suggest that voters materials have been given to local government chairmen, but none have been made available publicly and voting is yet to begin as of 10:30. Similar reports from local monitoring groups in Abia indicate a similar problem there.

¶ 17. COMMENT: For now the situation remains calm and INEC and patient voters are trying to work out the problems in the process. While the logistical problems appear to be worse than in 2003, in general the polling has started in typical Nigerian fashion. As the day progresses, it seems likely that tensions will rise and the result of that is, as of yet, unpredictable.

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